DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 934 FL 018 276

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TITLE An Investigation of Students' Perspectives on Anxiety and Speaking.
PUB DATE Aug 89
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (San Antonio, TX, August 10-14, 1989).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Communication; College Students; *Communication Apprehension; Higher Education; High Schools; High School Students; Questionnaires; *Second Language Learning; Spanish; *Speech Communication; *Student Attitudes; Teacher Behavior

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the types of in-class, speaking-oriented activities that second language learners find anxiety-producing and the types of instructor practices that students perceive as anxiety-reducing. A 4-page questionnaire was administered to 135 university-level students of intensive Spanish and 109 high school students in first- and second-year Spanish. Three high school and five college instructors, all considered exemplary teachers, participated in the study. In general, the results confirm previous research findings on language class anxiety. The following suggestions are made for reducing learner anxiety: (1) having students verbalize their fears about language learning, then writing them on the board; (2) using an anxiety graph to pinpoint the highest level of anxiety of a given interaction; (3) encouraging student journal writing; (4) for anxieties stemming from learner personality, providing supplemental instruction or a support group; (5) for anxieties stemming from classroom procedures, using more pair and group work, with activities tailored to the learners' affective needs; (6) playing language games with an emphasis on problem-solving; and (7) role-playing with preparatory activities to instill class rapport. (MSE)

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An Investigation of Students' Perspectives on Anxiety and Speaking

D.J. Young

I dread going to Spanish class. My teacher is kinda nice and it can be fun, but I hate it when the teacher calls on me to speak. I freeze up and can't think of what to say or how to say it. And my pronunciation is terrible. Sometimes I think people don't even understand what I'm saying.

-*Anonymous Language Learner*

How many times have we heard our students voice reactions to their language class similar to the one above? An important challenge facing the foreign language teacher is to identify the specific aspects of instruction most troublesome to language learners, and as speaking in the foreign or second language is often cited as the most anxiety-producing experience for the language learner, investigations centering on this area would seem to be the logical starting point. We know, for example, that public speaking in a native language is often associated with fear and anxiety (2, 15), and several researchers have found that speaking in a foreign language in a classrom can also be very anxiety provoking. Stephen Krashen, Tracy Terrell and Alice Omaggio (25) and John Rassias and Earl Stevick (unpublished interviews) intuitively judged speaking as more anxiety-producing than reading, writing or listening. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope found that language learners expressed more anxiety over speaking than any other language skill, and Koch and Terrell (p.x) report that speaking-oriented activities received higher anxiety ratings by language learners than any other in-class activities. Price (p. x) describes the anguish her interviewees often experienced when compelled to speak publicly in the foreign language: "having to speak in the foreign language in front of peers was the greatest source of anxiety." With the current push to improve students' oral proficiency, teachers find themselves scurrying to find new ways to get their students to speak in

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the foreign language. The dilemma is that activities which encourage creative and authentic oral communication may also tend to encourage student anxiety. We must be concerned, therefore, with the impact the new proficiency-oriented approaches have on students' emotional security in the classroom.

The purpose of this study is to examine anxiety and speaking from the students' perspective. Do speaking activities indeed make students nervous? If so, what is it about speaking that makes students anxious? Which speaking- oriented in-class activities make students particularly uncomfortable? Can instructors do anything to reduce anxiety, particularly speaking anxiety, in the classroom?

Research on Foreign and Second Language Speaking Anxiety

A substantial amount of research already suggests that anxiety has an effect on performance in a foreign or second language (4, 9, 19, 22). However, research findings concerning students' anxiety related to speaking in the foreign or second language class are relatively scarce.

In Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (p. 126), counselors in a study skills center specified speaking and listening as "the most frequently cited concern of the anxious foreign language students needing help..." In this same study, subjects with high anxiety scores reported being "afraid to speak in the foreign language class" (p. 129). Similar student reactions to speaking were found by Koch and Terrell (p. xx). They found that of all the activities in the Natural Approach examined, students reported oral presentations, skits, role-playing, defining words in Spanish, dealing with situations, and charades to be the most anxiety-producing.

Price (p. xx) found speaking in the foreign language to be the greatest source of anxiety in her subjects. One student reaction to speaking was as follows:

> French classes were very, very stressful for me, because I

> didn't speak well... everything came out in a Texas accent, which was horrible, because the professor would stop me and make me go over and over it and I still couldn't get it right. The more they made me do it, the more frightened I became (p. x).

Bailey's (1: p. 96) subjects also express anxiety over speaking. Bailey analyzes language learners' diary entries and from them she concludes that competitiveness can lead to anxiety when language learners compare themselves to others, or to an idealized self-image, and "anxiety can be caused and/or aggravated by the learner's competitiveness when he sees himself as less proficient than the object of comparison." For example, one student wrote of her anxiety in learning a foreign language, which she attributed to "the stressful competitive nature of oral public performance" in the foreign language class (p. 27).

We see from these studies, then, that students often associate anxiety with speaking in class. The present effort takes a more systematic look at the types of in-class, speaking-oriented practices that language learners find anxiety-evoking as well as instructor practices which students perceive as anxiety reducing.

METHODOLOGY

To examine student anxiety reactions to speaking, a four-page questionnaire was developed to identify different types of in-class activities, particularly speaking-oriented ones which the researcher perceived as potentially anxiety-evoking. The questionnaire was administered to 135 university-level Spanish students enrolled in three first-semester and five intensive Spanish courses at the University of Texas at Austin and 109 high school Spanish students enrolled in one first-year and three second-year Spanish classes in Austin high schools. Three different high school teachers and five different university level instructors were involved in this study. All of the teachers were recognized in the school district or in the Spanish department as

experienced and outstanding language teachers on the basis of their supervisor and student evaluations. The high school teachers were considered Master teachers who had worked cooperatively with the school district in the university student teaching program. These instructors were selected on the basis of being exemplary teachers and on their willingness to cooperate in this study.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three distinct sections. The first section asked students to agree or disagree with twenty-four items related to general foreign-language class anxiety and to in-class activities. Test -retest for reliability of this section was satisfactory (r = .74, p < .0001). Section two of the questionnaire asked students to rate their anxiety level in the face of twenty different in-class activities. Students were to identify their level of anxiety for each activity using a five point Likert scale ranging from Very Relaxed, Moderately Relaxed, Neither Relaxed Nor Anxious, Moderately Anxious, to Very Anxious. The last section of the questionnaire asked students to specify what their instructors did that decreased anxiety in class and to identify characteristics of the instructor that helped reduce anxiety.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed in the first section of the questionnaire by calculating the percent of students who agreed and disagreed with each item. This same procedure was applied for all twenty-four items to all three groups: High School, Intensive Spanish and First Year Spanish. Chi Square was then used to determine whether there were any differences among proportions (percentages) according to group (i.e., High School, Intensive Spanish and First Year Spanish).

For the data in the second section of the questionnaire, where students were asked to rate their anxiety level for each activity, the activities were ranked according to their mean and a Duncan's Multiple

Range Test was used to determine which activity types were significantly different from each other.

Since the data from the last section of the questionnaire consisted of student comments regarding instructor characteristics and techniques that helped reduce language anxiety, a tally was developed from their comments. If a comment occurred more than twice, it had potential tabulation worth and therefore formed a comment item. A number of comments occurred only once or twice and may have represented individual student idiosyncracies. Therefore, these items were not reported.

Speaking-Oriented In-Class Activities

Table I lists the items from section 1 of the questionnaire along with the percentage of students agreeing or disagreeing with each questionnaire item. Students were consistent across language groups in their response to items related to three categories which were selected post hoc: activity task, speaking errors, and preparedness. Results and discussion will, therefore, follow these headings.

TABLE I

Questionnaire Items and Student Reactions to In-Class Activities Based on Percentages in Agreement or Disagreement With Item

	High School First Semester Sp (n=109)			University Intensive Spn. (n=72)			University (n=63)		
	*A	D	N	A	D	N	A	D	N
ITEM									
Item 1 I would feel more confident about speaking in class if we practiced speaking more.	68%	31%	1%	83%	12%	5%	57%	40%	3%

Item 2	I would feel less self-conscious about speaking in class in front of others if I knew them better.								
	56%	44%	0%	79%	18%	3%	57%	41%	2%
Item 3	I feel very relaxed in class when I have studied a great deal the night before.								
	72%	28%	0%	93%	7%	0%	92%	8%	0%
Item 4	I am less anxious in class when I am not the only person answering a question.								
	65%	35%	0%	85%	13%	2%	71%	29%	0%
Item 5	I think I can speak the foreign language pretty well, but when I know I am being graded, I mess up.								
	51%	49%	0%	68%	31%	1%	49%	46%	5%
Item 6	I would be more willing to volunteer answers in class if I wasn't so afraid of saying the wrong thing.								
	62%	37%	1%	74%	26%	0%	54%	46%	0%
Item 7	I enjoy class when we work in pairs.								
	77%	23%	0%	79%	18%	3%	49%	43%	8%
Item 8	I feel more comfortable in class when I don't have to get in front of the class.								
	75%	25%	0%	68%	31%	1%	79%	19%	2%
Item 9	I would enjoy class if we weren't corrected at all in class.								
	13%	87%	0%	32%	68%	0%	49%	49%	2%
Item 10	I am more willing to speak in class when we discuss current events.								
	56%	43%	1%	40%	57%	3%	37%	54%	9%
Item 11	I would get less upset about my class if we did not have to cover so much material in such a short period of time.								
	65%	35%	0%	82%	17%	1%	57%	33%	10%

Item 12	I enjoy class when we do skits in class.								
	54%	43%	3%	65%	32%	3%	51%	38%	11%
Item 13	I would feel better about speaking in class if the class were smaller.								
	46%	54%	0%	35%	63%	2%	41%	54%	5%
Item 14	I feel comfortable in class when I come to class prepared.								
	87%	13%	0%	96%	4%	0%	95%	5%	0%
Item 15	I am more willing to speak in class when we have a debate scheduled.								
	27%	72%	1%	35%	60%	5%	14%	62%	24%
Item 16	I am less anxious in class when I am not the only person answering a question.								
	63%	36%	1%	89%	8%	3%	67%	25%	8%
Item 17	I like going to class when we are going to role play situations.								
	47%	53%	0%	47%	47%	6%	38%	51%	11%
Item 18	I would not be so self-conscious about speaking in class if it was commonly understood that everyone makes mistakes, and it was not such a big deal to make a mistake.								
	83%	17%	0%	90%	8%	2%	67%	24%	9%
Item 19	I prefer to be allowed to volunteer an answer instead of being called on to give an answer.								
	79%	19%	2%	82%	17%	1%	43%	46%	11%
Item 20	I am more willing to participate in class when the topics we discuss are interesting.								
	94%	6%	0%	89%	10%	1%	75%	19%	6%
Item 21	I would be less nervous about taking an oral test in the foreign language if I got more practice speaking in class.								
	46%	20%	34%	86%	13%	1%	56%	27%	17%
Item 22	I enjoy class when I can work with another student.								

	77%	23%	0%	92%	8%	0%	57%	33%	10%
Item 23	I would feel uncomfortable if the instructor never corrected our mistakes in class.								
	63%	28%	9%	74%	25%	1%	57%	38%	5%
Item 24	I feel uneasy when my fellow students are asked to correct my mistakes in class.								
	41%	58%	1%	47%	47%	6%	30%	57%	13%

A = Agree D= Disagree N=No Answer

Activities. The students here reported they would feel more confident about speaking in class if they practiced speaking more (Item 1), but their level of comfort or anxiety depended on the kind of activity under which they were asked to perform orally in the foreign language. Students feel less anxious when they feel they are not the only persons answering a question (Item 4); most students prefer to volunteer an answer than to be called on to give an answer (Item 19); and students report feeling more comfortable when they don't have to get up in front of the class (Item 8). Students also reported being less willing to speak in class when a debate was scheduled (Item 15). These reactions indicate that students do not want to be "put on the spot" or singled out to speak in the foreign language in front of their peers. If this is the case, and we want to provide our students with speaking-oriented activities that are less anxiety-evoking, what speaking-oriented activities do we consider for the foreign language class? Results from the questionnaire give some insight into what can be done to help reduce language anxiety.

Most students reported more willingness to participate in class when the topics being discussed were interesting (Item 20), and high school students particularly agreed on this item (94%). Students reported enjoying class when they could work with another student (Item 22 and Item 7). 1 First semester university Spanish students, however, were split on

this item. One possible explanation is that one teacher reported seldom to never having students work in groups of two in her class in contrast to other classes in which pair work was reported by the teacher as more common. It may be that students from that class were unfamiliar with paired work and feared exposing themselves to another student.

Speaking Errors. Most subjects reported they would be more willing to volunteer answers if they weren't afraid of saying the wrong thing (Item 6). Horwitz et al. (1986) found similar reactions; 65% of their subjects disagreed with the statement "I don't worry about making mistakes in language class" (p. 129). Students appear afraid to speak in the foreign language class in front of each other and their instructor. Perhaps they fear making a mistake in front of their peers and/or teachers, or maybe they simply do not want to have to publicize their errors in the foreign language because it affects their own self esteem. Note that according to Item 18, a strong majority of the students feel that they would not be so self-conscious about speaking in class if it were commonly understood that everyone make mistakes and it were not such a big deal to make a mistake. Interestingly enough, most students report wanting to have their mistakes corrected, particularly the high school students. A majority of all the students here reported they would feel uncomfortable if the instructor never corrected their mistakes (Item 23), and they disagreed with the statement, "I would enjoy class if we weren't corrected at all in class" (Item 9). 2 This desire on the part of students to have their mistakes corrected may originate from some preconceived notion about how foreign language classes work, or perhaps students have come to believe that improvement comes through error correction, a belief reinforced throughout the schooling acculturation. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that students believe their mistakes need correcting. In light of this finding, anxiety and fear of making a mistake may be more directly related to how, how often, and when errors are corrected than to the fact that they are corrected.

Preparedness. Items 3 and 4 on the questionnaire were related to general class anxiety and preparedness. A large majority of students felt

that they were more relaxed in class when they had studied a great deal the night before or when they came to class prepared (Item 3 and 4). 3 This could mean that teachers may want to motivation students to prepare for class before coming to class. Teachers could give short 5-10 minute pop quizzes to insure students are studying the material at home.

Results of a Chi Square reported in Table II indicates that there was a statistically significant relationship for a number of items between how subjects responded to tho item and what group they were in.

TABLE II
Chi Square of Subjects Agreeing with
Items by Group Membership

Item No.	Chi Square	df	N	value	significance level
1		2	238	13.20	p. <.001*
2		2	241	13.21	p. <.001*
3		2	243	18.12	p. <.000*
4		2	242	10.63	p. <.005*
5		2	241	6.48	p. <.039*
6		2	243	5.66	p. <.059
7		2	237	14.52	p. <.001*
8		2	242	2.39	p. <.302
9		2	243	27.87	p. <.000*
10		2	256	4.27	p. <.118
11		2	237	8.30	p. <.016*
12		2	232	2.47	p. <.290
13		2	239	1.84	p. <.398
14		2	244	5.67	p. <.059
15		2	223	4.63	p ,<.098

16	2	236	16.92	p. <.000*
17	2	233	0.62	p. <.730
18	2	237	7.23	p. <.027*
19	2	234	25.51	p. <.000*
20	2	239	7.75	p. <.021*
21	2	195	8.65	p. <.013*
22	2	238	15.28	p. <.000*
23	2	231	3.25	p. <.196
24	2	231	3.02	p. <.221

*indicates level of significance less than .05.

Fourteen out of twenty-four items were found to show a significant difference between the number of subjects agreeing with the item and the group with which they were members. An inspection of the contingency table showed that the high school Spanish students and the first semester university Spanish students responded more similarly than students in the intensive university Spanish course. In most cases all the responses were similar in direction of response, i.e., agree or disagree, but the percentages tended to be higher for the intensive university Spanish course. For example, Item 2 states "I would feel less self-conscious about speaking in class in front of others if I knew them better." While 56% of the high school and 57% of the first semester university Spanish students agreed with the statement, 79% of the intensive university Spanish students agreed with it. A probable explanation for this difference rests with the nature of the intensive course. Students in the intensive university Spanish course cover the entire first year book in one semester. The course is known among the students as "turbo Spanish," and may be inherently anxiety producing because of the amount of material for which students are responsible. Particularly in intensive language courses, teachers may want to be sensitized to the effects of anxiety during the language learning process and be aware of anxiety reducing strategies.

All subjects, on the other hand, reacted similarly to having to get up in front of the class (Item 8), discussing current events (Item 10), doing skits in

class (Item 12), speaking in a smaller class (Item 13), speaking in a debate, (Item 15), role playing situations (Item 17), and having errors corrected (Items 13 and 14).

Activities Arranged by Anxiety Level

In the second section of the questionnaire students were asked to rate their level of anxiety when called on to participate in a number of in-class activities (See Table III); the list was not meant to be exhaustive or to reflect any foreign language teaching method. There was not a significant

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TABLE III

Activities Arranged by Anxiety Level by Means

Anxiety Level	Mean		Activity
Moderately Relaxed	4.54	1.	Read silently in class.
	4.38	2.	Repeat as a class after the instructor.
	4.05	3.	Write a composition at home.
Neither Anxious Nor Relaxed	3.94	4.	Do exercises in the book.
	3.90	5.	Work in groups of 3 or 4.
	3.69	6.	Work on projects (i.e., newspapers filmstrips, photo albums).
	3.53	7.	Compete in class games by teams.
	3.53	8.	Repeat individually after the instructor.
	3.51	9.	Open discussion based on volunteer participation.
	3.50	10.	Interview each other in pairs.
	3.30	11.	Work in groups of two and prepare a skit.
	3.26	12.	Read orally in class.
	3.13	13.	Listen to questions and write answers
		14.	to the questions.
	3.07	15.	Speak individually with the instructor in his/her office.
	3.02	16.	Write a composition in class.

Moderately Anxious	2.83	17. Write your work on the board.
	2.47	18. Present a prepared dialog in front of the class.
	2.26	19. Make an oral presentation of skit in front of the class.
	2.23	20. Speak in front of the class.
	2.12	21. Role play a situation spontaneously in front of the class.

Results of a Duncan's Multiple Range Test indicates the difference between means should be at least .896 to be considered significant.

number of subjects who rated an activity as either "very anxious" or "very relaxed." Instead, the mean range in anxiety level spanned "moderately anxious" to "moderately relaxed."

Four of the five activities within the highest level of anxiety reported as "moderately anxious," were speaking- oriented activities. This cluster of activities has one particularly noteworthy feature in common--they are activities that have the highest student exposure requirement. Contrast these "moderately anxious" activities with those at the other end of the spectrum. There is little to no risk of exposure involved in writing a composition at home, repeating as a class after the instructor, or reading silently. The activities for which subjects reported being neither anxious nor relaxed contain speaking-oriented activities, but students are not overly exposed in these activities. Such findings, then, suggest that foreign language students experience a fear of self-exposure; they are afraid of revealing themselves or being spotlighted in front of others.

Results from Duncan's Multiple Range Test used to determine which activity types were significantly different from each other support the above findings. These results are presented in a matrix in Table IV.

TABLE IV

Significant Differences Between Activity Types Activities

An interesting pattern surfaced among the results. Note that activities 1-6 were not statistically significantly different from each other and activities 15 through 20 were also not statistically significantly different from each other. The common denominator of activities 15 through 20 is that students must get up in front of the class. Note that even through students do not have to speak, they have the same reaction to writing their work on the board as to speaking in front of others. It is easy to discern from these data that students experience higher levels of anxiety when they have to speak in the foreign language, but the real anxiety-evoking situation is having to speak or perform in front of others.

Instructor Characteristics and Techniques Related to Anxiety Reduction.

The last section of the questionnaire contained two questions: Items

26 and 27 asked students to comment on what the instructor does to decrease foreign language class anxiety and to describe instructor characteristics which tend to reduce students' foreign language speaking anxiety. From 244 students, there were 195 responses and 49 no response. Table V consists of a summary of students' comments.

TABLE V

Student Comments to Items 26 and 27

Item 26: What, if anything, does your instructor do to decrease any anxiety you may have in your foreign language class?

Error Correction	No. of Comments	Percent
1. Instructor has attitude that mistakes are no big deal.	22	18%
2. Instructor has attitude that mistakes are made by everyone.	20	17%
3. Instructor does not make you feel stupid when you make a mistake.	14	12%
4. Instructor's manner of correction is is not harsh.	9	8%
5. Instructor does not over-react to mistakes	3	3%
Activities		
6. Students are not put "on the spot."	22	17%
7. Students can volunteer answers and are not called on to provide responses.	14	12%
8. Students are asked to work in groups or pairs.	11	9%
9. All students are called		

	on equally.	8	7%
10.	Instructor prepares class well and reviews	5	4%
11.	Students get practice speaking.	5	4%

Item 27: What characteristics does your instructor have which tend to reduce your anxiety about speaking in class.

Instructor Characteristic		No. of Comments	Percent
a.	Good sense of humor	23	18%
b.	Friendly	22	17%
c.	Relaxed	13	10%
d.	Patient	11	9%
e.	Makes students feel comfortable	10	8%
f.	Encourages students to speak	10	8%
g.	Understanding	9	7%
h.	Helpful	6	5%
i.	Compliments students	6	5%
j.	Explains material well	6	5%
k.	Instructor creates casual atmosphere	5	4%
l.	Smiles	4	3%
l.	Cares	2	2%

Students' comments to item 26, "What, if anything, does your instructor do to decrease any anxiety you may have in your foreign language class?" could be grouped into two categories: 1) comments related to error correction, and 2) comments related to activity-type/task. While 58% of the comments dealt with error corrections (mistakes in oral production), 43% dealt with in-class activities. Within the domain of the 58% dealing with error correction, 18% of the students felt that their instructor reduced foreign language class anxiety by not "making a big deal" over mistakes; 17 % felt that

instructors helped decrease anxiety by helping students realize that everyone makes mistakes. Within the domain of the 43% dealing with activities, 12 % of the students felt that instructors helped reduce anxiety by letting students volunteer answers instead of calling on students to provide responses; 9% felt that working in small groups was anxiety-reducing.

Student comments to item 27, "What characteristics does your instructor have which tend to reduce your anxiety about speaking in class?", are also useful. The following instructor characteristics were cited by a greater number of students: friendly (17%), good sense of humor (18%), patient (9%)
and relaxed (10%).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON RELATED CONCEPTS

This study, examined along side the other research on language anxiety (8), suggests that students' anxiety can stem from classroom procedures but learners anxieties may also stem from personality considerations. The fear of speaking in front of the class may be related to an individuals self esteem. Krashen (25: p. xx) contends that an individual's degree of self esteem is highly related to his degree of language anxiety. And Price (p. xx) reports that the majority of her subjects believed "that their language skills were weaker than those of the other students. . . that they weren't doing a good job and that everyone else looked down on them. . . that they should have done much better than they did, that if they had only worked a little harder, they could have been successful at this task." Low self-esteem can be particularly significant in a language class where students are expected to perform more than in the large history, government or chemistry class. Anxieties stemming from personal considerations have also been proposed on the basis of theoretical considerations. Krashen (25) posits that anxiety in the language learning context is wrapped up in the phenomenon he refers to as "club

membership." In short, Krashen argues that the affective filter is down when you want to become a "member of the group" - in this context a member of the Spanish, French, German club, or whatever the target language group is. Gardner's (1985) work on integrative motivation seems to parallel Krashen's interpretation of language anxiety.

Terrell (25) associates foreign language anxiety with what he calls "target language group identification," similar to Krashen's "group membership" phenomenon but with an added dimension. Terrell suggests that "children acquire their first language and a second language in order to identify and be a member of the group that speaks that language" and that "this strong motivation for identification or assimilation forces them to attend to the input very carefully, so that their output will match the input" (p.3) For Terrell, then, alongside group membership is the importance of a certain level of attention or arousal. The filter is down when students experience "target language group identification," but this is not enough for successful language learning. He suggests that a certain amount of attention to the input is necessary. Terrell points out that attention does not necessarily mean anxiety.

Rardin (25: p. x)) goes on to make a distinction between a learner's productive state of alertness and a non-productive state of stress. She posits that 'alertness' is "what is happening when the person is in a state of optimal tension, stress or anxiety," but if the stress level increases too much "alertness" develops into confusion, anger, and quite probably a change in performance" (p. x).

Krashen and Terrell hold, in part, a view of language anxiety close to that of social anxiety as explained by Leary (11) and existential anxiety as explained by Rardin. According to Leary (p. 98), constructs such as speech anxiety, shyness, stage fright, embarrassment, social-evaluative anxiety and communication apprehension, although not exactly synonymous, encompass one psychological phenomenon, social anxiety. By definition, social anxiety surfaces from "the prospect or presence of interpersonal evaluation in real or imagined social

settings" (p. 102). When defined this way, social anxiety becomes the same sociopsychological phenomenon as that in speech anxiety, stage fright and communication apprehension, but in different kinds of social settings. For Leary (p. 102) "some of these terms, such as audience anxiety, speech anxiety, and communication apprehension, are typically used when people experience social anxiety while performing or speaking before others." For Rardin, (p. 3) "existential anxiety" is a more profound type of anxiety inherently built into the language learning process that "touches the core of one's self-identity, one's self image. . ." According to her, the train of thought goes something like this. "If I learn another language, I will somehow lose myself; I, as I know myself to be, will cease to exist. Although social anxiety may contribute to language anxiety, Krashen, Rardin and Terrell suggest that there are psychological phenomena particular to the foreign language setting such as the concept of "group membership" and existential anxiety. Other psychological phenomena particular to the language learning context include Schumann's (18) concept of "social distance", Guiora's (5) idea of language ego, and Clark's (3) theory of "clash of consciousness" or cultural assimilation. These psychological phenomena, along with low self-esteem, and erroneous beliefs about language learning may be the seeds for students' language anxiety as expressed in fear over speaking in front of others, and competitiveness.

CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

The following are suggestions for reducing learner anxieties stemming from classroom procedures and personal considerations. To deal with anxieties derived from personal factors, a variety of techniques and approaches are called for. Foss and Reitzel offer several techniques for reducing language anxiety stemming from learner beliefs, however these same techniques are quite appropriate for anxieties stemming from personality considerations. Foss and Reitzel (p. 445) argue that if students can recognize their irrational beliefs or fears, they will be

able to interpret anxiety provoking situations in more realistic ways and eventually opt to approach rather than avoid an anxiety evoking situation. To help the students recognize their fears about language learning, the instructor asks them to verbalize them and then writes what they say on the board. In this way all students get to see they are not alone in their anxieties. The students then select a few and work through questions "designed to convince them of the lack of logic behind the belief" or the fear (See Foss and Reitzel for detailed information on this technique as some understanding of how it works is necessary for success).

Another technique for reducing language anxiety due to speaking is to use an anxiety graph (6: pp. 447-448). An anxiety graph helps pinpoint the highest level of anxiety in a given interaction. An analysis of the graph could help the learner approach the same situation with more information, therefore more realistically.

And finally, Foss and Reitzel suggest journal writing as a good way to help reduce language anxiety. Howritz, Horwitz, and Cope and Bailey also support journal writing as a way of tracking anxieties in language learning. From their journals, students can "learn to recognize feelings of inadequacy so they may arrive at more realistic expectations" (6: p. 450).

To help anxieties stemming from learner personality, learners may need to participate in some form of supplemental instruction or a support group, e.g., work with a tutor, join a language club, do relaxation exercises and/or practice self-talk. Self talk can be particularly useful for coping with state anxiety (anxiety due to an evaluative situation). The following (from the Learning Resource Center at the University of Texas, Austin) is an example of self-talk.

Situation: Walking toward the front of the room for an oral presentation.

Anxiety Provoking Self-Talk: "I can't talk in public. I'll forget everything... I've always stumbled over my words when it really counts. Last time I was so nervous I sounded like a robot..."

Productive Self-Talk: "I can handle this....Just relax... take a deep slow breath and I'll start as I rehearsed it."

To decrease anxieties stemming from classroom procedures, instructors can do more pair work, play more games, and tailor their activities to the affective needs of the learner. Research suggests that language anxiety is alleviated when students work in small groups, dc pair work, and experience personalized language instruction. In Young, (24), students did not report high levels of anxiety when given the ACTFL's Oral Proficiency Interview in an informal one-on-one setting. This supports the idea of pair work as a low anxiety activity. Furthermore, language learners in the study here reported enjoying class more when they could work with another student and when the discussions were interesting. Similarly, Price (p. 14) reports some of her subjects suggesting that smaller classes and familiarity with other students in the class could help alleviate anxiety. Students in the study described here also report feeling less anxious when they were not spot-lighted to speak. More specifically, they were less anxious when they were not the only persons being called on to speak, when they were able to volunteer answers, and when they did not have to get up in front of the class.

In the Natural Approach, besides group work, it is the "personalized aspect of the Natural Approach that makes students feel the most comfortable." In Koch and Terrell (p. xx) more than half of their students report the following activities as ones they felt comfortable doing: "using pictures to present vocabulary, pairing students with their classmates, personalizing grammar, having students work with different students, associating vocabulary with students and objects in the class, and putting students into groups of 3-6." Group work not only addresses the affective concerns of the students, it is also an effective way to facilitate acquisition of the target language (14, 12, 20).

Saunders and Crookall (p. 169) suggest that playing games with the language can also reduce language anxiety. They posit that

If the learning of a new language provokes inhibition and caution in

> the part of the adult who fears ridicule because of incompetence in a 'real situation, the activity of play within game scenarios has great potential. In effect the person at play can be more easily forgiven for error of judgement and poor communication. There is always the excuse of unfamiliarity with the social rules, roles and norms of a game for novice players.. Playing games with the language does not necessarily mean playing traditional, competitive games such as Jeopardy, Password, or Hangman. Language games might include something as simple as "the exclusive use of a second language to secure information about previous outcomes or about factors considered relevant to the determination of the next outcome" (17: p. 170).

Playing language games with an emphasis on problem-solving as suggested by Saunders and Crookall can be a effective way to create interest, motivate students, encourage participation and reduce language anxiety. They advise, however, that "some care has to be taken in the overzealous introduction of play in simulated contexts within the classroom, especially when games have the potential of arousing too much excitement, anxiety, or competition amongst more experienced or critical participants" (p. 171) .

Tailoring activities to the affective needs of the learner is one more way of dealing with anxieties stemming from classroom procedures. For example, speaking <u>in front of the class</u> has been repeatedly cited as evoking anxiety. Foss and Reitzel (p. 448) describe an activity that takes into accounts learner's anxiety over speaking in front of the class - oral interpretation. In this activity students practice reading a script orally before an audience only after they have practiced it extensively in a group.

Another example of tailoring activities to meet the affective needs of the learner is to precede role plays, usually cited as highly anxiety provoking, with activities that build class rapport.

LIMITATION

The instructors and teachers in this study were considered "master" teachers who had a reputation in the school district or in the Spanish department at the university of being excellent teachers. As a result, students' levels of anxiety may not reflect the levels of anxiety experienced by students of less motivated, less enthusiastic and less experienced teachers

CONCLUSION

This study examined foreign language class anxiety in relation to in-class activities and instructor personality/behavior, and its results have provided confirmation of other researchers' observations of foreign language class anxiety. Studies such as the one here provide the insight and direction necessary for future research. Because anxiety is a psychological construct with multiple dimensions, much more research is needed to fully understand the role of anxiety in language learning. For example, does learning a foreign language become something even more significant than just learning an academic subject? Does the language learning experience affect our self image and our self identity (existential anxiety)? How does teacher personality affect learners' anxiety? Do language learners experience anxiety because of a lack of proficiency or does a lack of proficiency lead to more anxiety? What are other sources of anxiety for the language learner and how do we reduce anxiety in the context of the foreign language class?

NOTES

1. Koch and Terrell (p. xx) similarly found that interviewing their classmates (paired/group work) made their students feel significantly more comfortable than did an array of other activities, and they conclude that "working in small groups, discussing relevant topics, and relating grammar and vocabulary to their personal interests will make students feel comfortable" (p. xx).

2. In the study by Koch and Terrell students also reported anxiety due to <u>not</u> having speech errors corrected; among lack of error correction made 32% nervous and 42% angry (p. xx). .

3. The study by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (p. 130) reported 49% of their subjects disagreeing with the statement "I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance," and 49% agreed with the statement "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class" (p. 29).

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